

ROAD TEST

TRIUMPH SPEED TRIPLE
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WARNING: this bike is not for shrinking violets!



CHUCK it into second gear turns and squirt it out. Heaven!

★ **WORLD EXCLUSIVE**

See video action from this test online...
www.motorcyclenews.com/video

21st century toy

For hooligans everywhere, the new Speed Triple isn't just the most eagerly awaited Triumph in years, it could be the bike of the millennium. So, was it worth the wait?

BY MICHAEL NEEVES PICTURES BY GOLD&GOOSE

THE new Speed Triple oozes attitude from every grommet. It's a compact, granny-worrying wheelie monster built for tearing up back roads. MCN was at the bike's launch in unseasonably-sunny Saint Tropez in the south of France to find out if this is the bike that hooligans have been waiting for, and to see how it'll stand up to every day riding...

YOU THINK IT LOOKS GOOD IN PICTURES...

It's even better in the flesh. It's much smaller than you expect, especially the wheelbase – the front and rear wheels look like they're about to touch. Wheelie heaven here we come!

Like a pit bull terrier, the Triumph is muscle-packed, short and stocky – accentuated by that stubby rear tail section. There are stacks of neat styling touches, like the underseat pipes, trademark twin headlights, that new 1050cc in-line-triple engine gleaming loud and proud in gloss black. The water pipes and oil cooler are hidden out of the

way to give the exposed engine a cleaner look. And the chunky 45mm upside-down forks and radial brakes bring this Triumph kicking and screaming right into the 21st century. In short, the new Speed Triple looks sinister from every angle (though that big number plate holder has *got* to go!).

IT'S EVEN BETTER ON THE MOVE

The Speed Triple might have been penned with the hooligan element in mind, but for the likes of you and me going about our daily business it's very user-friendly, too.

Around town at sensible speeds there's so much stomp available from its 1050cc motor that it's quite happy pootling along in top gear. Just twist the throttle from as little as 2000rpm and the Triumph pulls smoothly and cleanly. With a very healthy 70ftlb from as little as 3300rpm it's a massive understatement to say this new engine is flexible. The fuel injection is super smooth, too.

A comfy seat and roomy riding position

let you stay in the saddle all day with no aches or pains – but it's not too tall either: a 5' 8" rider will comfortably get both feet flat on the floor at a standstill.

NO APOLOGIES

But while the new Triple is very easy to get on with, Triumph has also given it a raw, aggressive edge.

Just like a ZX-10R or the new GSX-R1000, the new Speed Triple feels like it's plugged directly into the mains. The motor has a very linear power delivery and is punchy from low down, but it also feels raw and nasty. You feel every engine revolution, every pulse through the seat of your pants – and it's fabulous. It's the same story with the suspension. It tracks superbly over the worst bumps but it is on the stiff side, and has something of a race bike feel to it.

The new 1050cc engine is a peach. With chin on tank and throttle back to the stop in top gear, expect to see anything between 150-155mph, depending on how strong your neck muscles are. But these kinds of speeds are

academic as the Triple's ideal playground is twisty A and B roads, enjoying life below the ton.

The gloriously bendy roads near the Paul Ricard circuit in the sunny South of France provide mile after mile of second and third gear corners. Time to pin it in second to get the full force of that 128bhp motor. Ridden like this you need to hunch over the front wheel to keep the Michelin Pilot Power rubber on the ground as the needle on the white-faced tacho swings urgently past the 7000rpm mark towards the 10,000rpm redline.

Sit a little more upright, though, and the front wheel will ease into the air between corners with utter control, even with a fair amount of lean still dialled in. Snick into third and repeat to fade. This kind of fun is the preserve of mega-naked bikes like this, and the Speed Triple is an unashamed expert. You just don't get these kicks on a sports bike.

PRIMAL SCREAM!

Triumph's big triples have always sounded good, but this new 1050cc

version comes with added, blood-curdling aggression. There's a deep rumble at low revs, which transforms into a kind of bombastic, metal-edged wail at full chat. If it wasn't for the windblast at speed, thanks to its lack of fairing, the engine noise would be good enough for ear plugs to be left at home.

And it's got the coolest gear change indicator on the planet. Most sports bikes have a little light which flashes when it's time to change gear, but the Speed Triple gives you Oxford Street's Christmas lights. As you approach peak revs (programmable to suit you) an array of green, amber, then... yes, you've guessed it, red LEDs glow to remind you to shift up a cog, although they're actually a bit difficult to see at speed in bright sunlight. Oh, and while we're on the subject of gears, the new gearbox is a big improvement over the old model, with nice slick changes and not a blistered toe in sight.

LOOK OUT, IT'S ANOTHER SPORTS BIKE EATER

The Triple is much easier to ride fast along tight, twisty roads than any full-on sports bike. Its suspension is sufficiently plush to absorb bumps yet stiff enough to tackle three-figure speed sweepers with confidence. There's also plenty of leverage from the wide bars which makes it easy to wrestle from side to side at speed. New radial brakes offer big power and lots of feel.

Yes, a girder-stiff sports bike would have the edge on a fast track or A-road, but only just. And then its poor, cramped rider would have crushed knees and a bad back at the end of it, whereas Mr Speed Triple can disembark and walk back into the house normally, without the need for a hot bath.

What's more, the Triumph feels tough, with a hard-edged feel compared to the soft and friendly KTM Super Duke, for example. With the Speed Triple, what you see is what you get. It's not aimed at shrinking violets. But if you come from a sports bike background and like your bikes tough and taut, it will be right up your street.

SO IT'S NOT FOR EVERYONE?

This is a very single-minded bike. A lack of any serious wind protection will make cross-continent work a pain in the neck, pillioners would need their head examined to get on the back – just look at that seat and impossibly high pegs – the mirrors don't work in the slightest, and it wants to wheelie all the time. For some, this will be a big turn-off. Not me though, I love it. It makes you proud to be British!

'It's got a raw, aggressive edge - like it's been plugged directly into the mains'



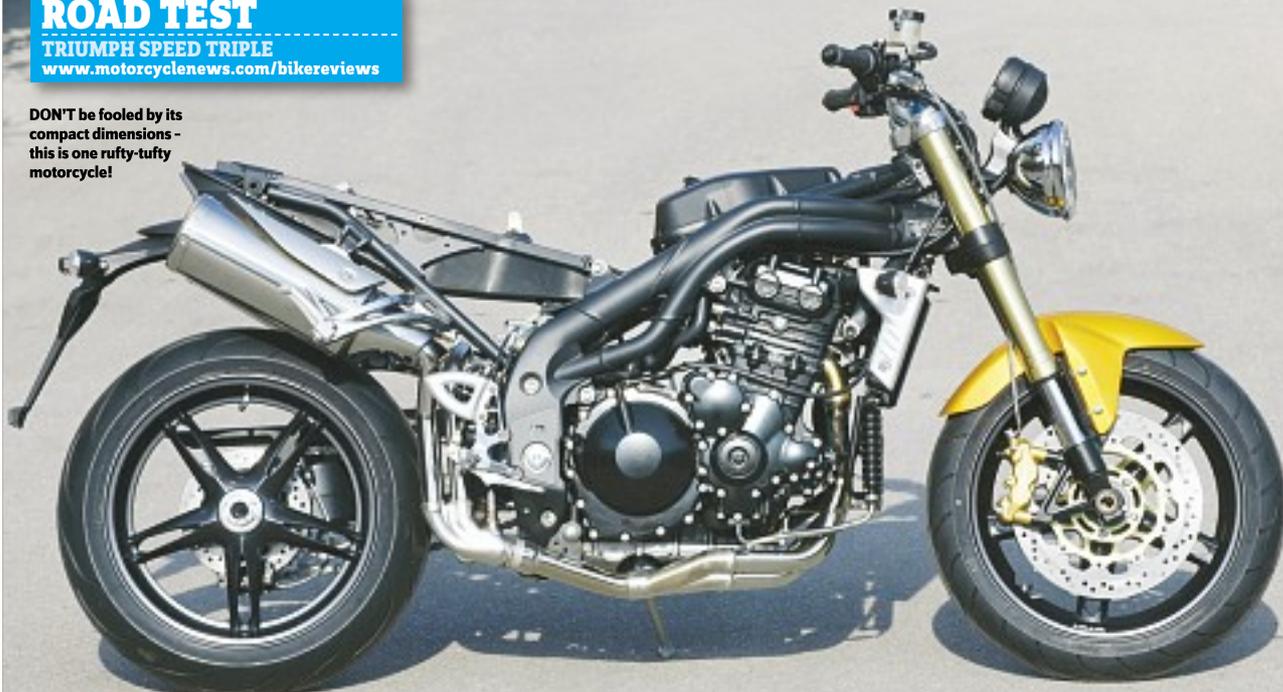
**TURN PAGE FOR
TECH & VERDICT**

ROAD TEST

TRIUMPH SPEED TRIPLE

www.motorcyclenews.com/bikereviews

DON'T be fooled by its compact dimensions - this is one rufy-tufy motorcycle!



What's changed this year?

ENGINE

The most significant change to the new Speed Triple is its new 1050cc motor - up from last year's 955cc. The extra capacity from the dohc inline triple has been achieved by increasing the stroke by 6.4mm, so there are new pistons and cranks to suit. A new cylinder head and revised valve timing result in a better breathing motor and a compression ratio of 12.0:1. Claimed power is now a hefty 128bhp @ 9100rpm (up a whopping

10bhp) with maximum torque increased to a meaty 78ftlb @ 5100rpm (up by a respectable 5ftlb).

A new Keihin fuel injection system massively improves throttle response.

The bike also gets a new slicker-shifting gearbox, fitted with a remote gear change linkage for a smoother action.

CHASSIS

The new Triple gets a lighter tubular aluminium frame with a shorter 1429mm

wheelbase, although rake and trail remain the same as the old model.

New 45mm fully-adjustable upside-down forks give more control of the front end and radial-mount four-piston front brake calipers provide fade-free performance.

Those sexy five-spoke wheels, clad with Michelin Pilot Power tyres (120/70 x 17 front; 180/55 x 17 rear) are new - the rear wheel is slightly narrower than before (5.5in instead of 6in), improving agility.

WHERE'S IT AT? SUPER NAKEDS

IT'S a close call between the Triumph and the superb Super Duke in this, THE class of 2005. We'll be able to separate them in our upcoming group test, but for now the Speed Triple gets it thanks to its lower price.

- 1 Triumph Speed Triple
- 2 KTM Super Duke
- 3 Aprilia Tuono
- 4 MV Agusta Brutale S
- 5 MZ 1000SF
- 6 Ducati Monster S4R
- 7 Benelli TNT
- 8 Kawasaki Z1000
- 9 Buell XB-12R Firebolt
- 10 Cagiva Raptor

VERDICT

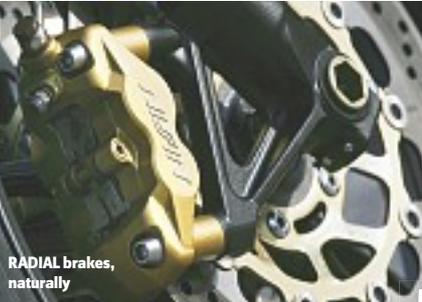
THE bike which single-handedly invented the super-naked streetfighter class over a decade ago is back - stronger than ever. It's smoother, faster, and easier to ride, better handling and hornier than ever before; it ticks all the right boxes. But the best thing about the new Speed Triple, which was the whole reason for inventing this bike in the first place, is that it's as much fun as any road bike can ever be, and goes to prove that you don't need a 180mph track missile to get your kicks. I'll take a black one please!

MCN SAYS:

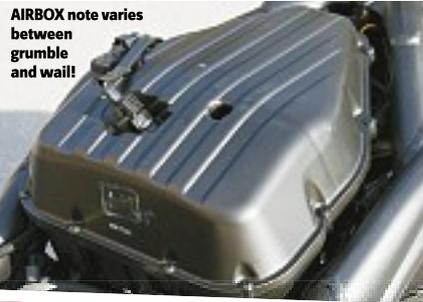
- ✓ Improved power all the way through the revs
- ✓ Superb handling

- ✗ Rubbish mirrors
- ✗ May be just too aggressive for some

SHIFT warning lights (far right) are very pretty



RADIAL brakes, naturally



AIRBOX note varies between grumble and wail!



NEW Triple gets LED lights for the first time



TRIBAL bodywork is optional extra



BLUE, yellow or black to choose from

SPEED TRIPLE HISTORY

TRIUMPH'S Speed Triple - the original factory streetfighter - was introduced to a slaving public in 1994. Here's how 11 years of development have led to the new model...



1994 Speed Triple 900
97bhp, 209kg
Triumph rips the fairing off its 885cc in-line-three-cylinder Daytona 900 and launches the Speed Triple.



1997 Speed Triple T509
106bhp, 196kg
The Speed Triple gets a curvy new tubular aluminium frame, single-sided swingarm, and those bad-ass twin headlights.



1999 Speed Triple
108bhp, 196kg
A new injected 955cc motor from the Daytona T595 is shoehorned in. It gains just 2bhp, but torque is up 10ftlb!



2002 Speed Triple
118bhp, 189kg
Fitted with the engine from the Daytona 955i, it gains even more power. Weight is down, making it much more flickable.



2005 Speed Triple
128bhp, 189kg
The Speed Triple moves into the 21st century with more aggressive look and more power from its 1050cc motor.

TRIUMPH SPEED TRIPLE

★★★★★
COST: £7699
POWER (claimed): 128bhp
WEIGHT (claimed): 189kg
TORQUE (claimed): 78ftlb
Availability: Mid-March
Colours: Black, blue, yellow
New for 2005: New model
Insurance group: 14 (of 17)
Info: Triumph, 01455-251700



TECHNICAL SPEC
Engine: Liquid-cooled 1050cc (79 x 71.4mm), 12v dohc, four-stroke inline triple. Fuel injection. Six gears.
Chassis: Tubular aluminium frame. Fully-adjustable 45mm upside-down forks and single rear shock. 2 x 320mm front discs with four-piston radial calipers. 220mm rear disc with twin-piston caliper. Tyres: 120/70 x 17 front, 180/55 x 17 rear